

move to bring to a close the debate on the motion to proceed to Calendar No. 12, S. Con. Res. 2, a bipartisan concurrent resolution on Iraq.

Harry Reid, Patty Murray, Herb Kohl, Jeff Bingaman, Benjamin L. Cardin, Frank R. Lautenberg, Chuck Schumer, Dick Durbin, Christopher Dodd, Bernard Sanders, Jack Reed, Joe Biden, Chuck Hagel, Robert Menendez, Olympia J. Snowe, Ron Wyden, Debbie Stabenow.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I have filed this bipartisan cloture motion. Because of that, I withdraw the motion to proceed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The motion is withdrawn.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The minority leader is recognized.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, in terms of the process by which we go forward next week to discuss the Iraq situation, as the majority leader indicated, we have been in discussions over the last couple of days about how that might go forward. We are still in the process of consulting with our Members. I have indicated to the majority leader that there is likely to be one or more additional resolutions offered by this side, and as we begin the week, I will have a clearer picture of just how many that might be, and then we can begin to sit down and structure the process by which those will be considered in the Senate. I look forward to working with the majority leader next week in that regard.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there be a period for morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

FIRST LIEUTENANT JACOB N. FRITZ

Mr. NELSON of Nebraska. Mr. President, I rise today to honor Army 1LT Jacob N. Fritz of Verdon, NE.

Lieutenant Fritz graduated from Dawson-Verdon High School in 2000. His peers and teachers recognized him as a natural leader. He was active in every extracurricular activity his school offered: speech, drama, basketball, football, track, and band. He organized drug-free parties and dances.

After high school, Lieutenant Fritz followed his dream of serving in the Armed Forces by enrolling in the Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 2005. His younger brother, Daniel, followed in his footsteps and is currently a third-year cadet at West Point.

Lieutenant Fritz had been serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, assigned to A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 377th Parachute Field Artillery Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, based in Fort Richardson, AK. On Saturday, January 20, 2007, Lieutenant Fritz

passed away when his dismounted patrol received indirect fire followed by small arms fire in Karbala, Iraq. He was 25 years old.

1LT Jacob Fritz is survived by his parents, Lyle and Noala Fritz of Verdon, NE, and his two younger brothers, Daniel and Ethan. I offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Lieutenant Fritz. He made the ultimate and most courageous sacrifice for our Nation. I join all Americans in grieving the loss of this remarkable young man and know that Lieutenant Fritz's passion for serving, his leadership, and his selflessness will remain a source of inspiration for us all.

SERGEANT MAJOR MARILYN GABBARD

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to honor SMA Marilyn Gabbard of the Iowa Army National Guard. The first woman ever promoted to the rank of Command Sergeant Major in the Iowa Army National Guard, Sergeant Major Gabbard was deployed to Iraq on December 16, 2006, and died in a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter crash on January 20, 2007, at 2:45 pm local Iraq time. Her colleagues said of her that she was a role model for other women in the Iowa National Guard, and her rise through the enlisted ranks was inspirational. She is remembered as a respected soldier and caring leader who always put her soldiers first. Her military decorations include three awards of the Meritorious Service Medal. My prayers go out to Marilyn's husband Edward and her seven children and stepchildren, her mother Mary Van Cannon, as well as her grandchildren and all her family and friends. SMA Marilyn Gabbard will be greatly missed. She leaves behind her a legacy of military achievement, immense compassion, and patriotic service. I hope that those who have been touched by her loss will find some comfort in the knowledge that her memory will live on like those countless other heroes throughout American history who have given their lives for our country.

SERGEANT TOMMY RIEMAN

Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to Army SGT Tommy Rieman, a native of Independence, KY, who received the military Silver Star for exceptional courage. He exhibited this courage when insurgents attacked his reconnaissance squad near the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq on December 3, 2003. His selfless act of bravery and unwillingness to fail exemplify the true definition of a soldier.

Sergeant Rieman grew up in Independence, a small town in northern Kentucky. While at Simon Kenton High School, he was captain of the football team and was a member of the wrestling team, before he graduated in 1999. Sergeant Rieman was a teenager, pumping gas at a local gas station when he decided to enlist in the Army. This monumental decision he made to begin his exceptional military career would go on to shape his destiny.

While serving in Iraq, Sergeant Rieman showcased immense calm

under pressure, when his squad came under attack by insurgents. With the convoy under heavy fire from rocket-propelled grenades and explosive devices, he used his own body as a shield to protect his squad gunman and returned fire to the enemy. The humvees that the squad was traveling in did not have any doors, so as a result Sergeant Rieman suffered two bullet wounds and multiple shrapnel injuries. Despite these injuries, he was still able to direct the convoy off the road and away from the live fire combat, only to be attacked by another smaller group of insurgents. Sergeant Rieman commanded and led his squad to return fire, and the enemy's weapons were silenced. At this point, the situation was calm and he was able to call a medical helicopter to treat the injuries of these brave soldiers.

After returning from Iraq, in August 2004 Sergeant Rieman was awarded a Silver Star for his brave actions that day in Fort Bragg, NC. He is now employed as an administrative assistant for the Army personnel office in the Pentagon. In May 2006, he was selected to be a participant in the "America's Army: Real Heroes" video game program, which recounts the lives of military soldiers who have shown heroism and bravery in the war on terror. Sergeant Rieman will have his military history and motivational story told through this game, with the hope of inspiring others to greatness.

On January 23, 2007, Sergeant Rieman was a guest of the First Lady and was formally recognized by President Bush, who discussed his bravery in the annual State of the Union Address to Congress. He stated that Sergeant Rieman, like so many other Americans who have volunteered to defend us, had earned the respect of the Nation. I cannot agree with this statement more. It brings me great pride to see a soldier of the caliber of Sergeant Rieman represent Kentucky in such a courageous and selfless way. He is an inspirational example to me and to the entire Commonwealth.

#### TRIBUTE TO DR. RONALD S. BOWEN

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Dr. Ronald S. Bowen, who has diligently served as the president of the Utah Dental Association, UDA. As president, Dr. Bowen has devoted his professional and leadership skills to serving Utah's 1,530 member dental organization.

The UDA is committed to the public's oral health, ethics, science, and professional development. I am proud of our dental health professionals who skillfully provide quality health care to thousands of Utahns. I am also proud of Dr. Ron Bowen, who as the president of the UDA has provided outstanding leadership among his colleagues as he represented the association on a national, state, and local level. He has extensively traveled the

State meeting with members to address their concerns and listen to their suggestions. In addition, he has a keen sense of the legislative process and has been able to use this knowledge to accomplish great things for the association.

Throughout his career, Dr. Bowen has garnered deep respect among his colleagues. He has an ability to listen to others, determine a course of action, and implement his ideas in an effective way.

Dr. Bowen is a practicing dentist and has had an established practice in the Salt Lake Valley for the past 22 years. He graduated with honors from the University of the Pacific, UOP, Dental School in San Francisco, CA. While at UOP, Ron served as student body and junior class presidents—demonstrating strong leadership skills at a young age.

During his longtime service to the dental community, Dr. Bowen has served on the UDA board of directors, where he has chaired the Government and Political Action Committees. Dr. Bowen has also served as the president of the Salt Lake District Dental Society and the Great Basin Academy. He was inducted into the International College of Dentists in 2003 and is a member of the Pierre Fuchard Society.

In addition, he is married to Melanie Hamilton Bowen and is the caring father of two daughters, Elysa and Lindsey.

Mr. President, the UDA has been greatly served this past year with Dr. Ron Bowen at the helm. His enthusiasm for the practice of dentistry and good dental health has been felt by many, and his colleagues have appreciated his efforts. I wish him many more happy, successful years of dentistry in Utah and join with many satisfied patients in thanking him for his tremendous service.

#### TRIBUTE TO JO ANNE BARNHART

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I want to commend someone who represents the very best of citizens in public service. I am speaking of Jo Anne Barnhart, the Commissioner of Social Security. Unfortunately, her term ended last Friday. I say “unfortunately” because she has done a superb job.

Jo Anne Barnhart did not need to take this job. She was doing very well running her own consulting firm. But she took the job for one reason: She wanted to improve the way that the Social Security Administration performs its duties. And SSA is a significantly better agency when Jo Anne left than when she first came on board.

That is not all. Many long-term career employees at SSA have said that she is the best Social Security Commissioner for whom they have worked. And a number of veteran Social Security observers and advocates have said the same thing. She has made a remarkable contribution to that agency.

What has Jo Anne accomplished? Everyone knows that the Social Security

Program provides benefits to workers who have retired. And the Social Security Program also provides benefits to the families of workers who have died. What is less well known is that Social Security provides benefits to workers who become disabled and to the families of those workers. This is one of Social Security's major functions.

Determining the benefits that retirees and survivors get is a relatively straightforward process, even where the eligibility rules are very detailed. But the same is not true for benefits for disabled workers.

There, SSA has to determine whether the applicant is permanently and totally disabled. This determination requires a lot of difficult work. For many applicants, the answer is not readily apparent. And the applicant can use several layers of appeals, if denied benefits. These additional layers add to the time that an applicant may have to wait before receiving benefits.

When Jo Anne took over the agency, it could take as much as 4 years for an applicant to be approved for benefits, if the applicant succeeded at the last layer of appeal. A disabled worker waiting for a decision is not earning any money. This can put enormous pressures on the worker and the worker's family.

My case workers in Montana have heard from some of the applicants who have been waiting incredibly long times for a decision. And their stories are harrowing. And the same was true for one Montana applicant who had to wait 4 years to get his disability benefits and who was kind enough to testify before the Finance Committee last year.

Jo Anne was fully aware of this problem when she took over the agency. And she was determined to do something about it.

The first step was to determine why it took so long for applicants to be approved. At her confirmation hearing, Jo Anne indicated that she would study this issue immediately. And she and I agreed that she would report back to me in 6 months.

Jo Anne completed that study and briefed me 6 months later, just as she had promised. Amazingly, this was the first comprehensive study SSA had ever done to determine why it took so long for disability applicants to be approved for benefits.

Jo Anne and her staff put every step involved in the disability application process on one chart. When she completed it, that chart was 25 feet long. Jo Anne deserves great credit for initiating and executing this pioneering study.

The study found that there were two causes of the long waiting times for approval of disability benefits, and Jo Anne set out to tackle each of them. About half of the delays occurred because of huge backlogs of cases. The principal cause of these backlogs is inadequate staffing, and the principal cause of inadequate staffing is lack of

budgetary resources. The other half of the waiting times was due to huge inefficiencies in the processing of disability claims.

Jo Anne responded to these challenges. First, she set out to reduce as much of the inefficiency in the disability adjudication process as possible.

She initiated the conversion of the application process from a paper-driven process to a completely electronic process. And she aggressively accelerated this conversion, completing the transformation in record time.

As a result, SSA now has the largest repository of medical evidence in the world. And the new system works. Previously, all evidence and records used during the adjudication process had to be mailed from one SSA office to another and from doctors' offices to SSA offices. This was inefficient, time-consuming, and expensive. Now all of this is accomplished electronically. Jo Anne deserves great credit for these changes.

And Jo Anne initiated a Disability Service initiative. This was a major overhaul of the multiple steps in the disability adjudication process. This initiative brought many improvements.

First, quick decisions are made in cases where the disability is obvious. Second, redundant appeal processes were eliminated. Third, huge amounts of time were saved for some appeals that would normally go to a hearing before an administrative law judge. That is a process that can take well over a year to occur. A new type of legal official was created in the system. This lawyer is given authority to award benefits before the case ever proceeds to a hearing. This dramatically reduces the time for the applicant to get benefits. Many other changes were made as well.

All of these changes are being piloted. It is hoped that these new processes will greatly increase the efficiency by which disability claims are adjudicated. If they do, Jo Anne will have accomplished something truly great.

Jo Anne also initiated action to deal with scarce budgetary resources, the second cause of long delays. She provided detailed and cogent briefings to the Directors of the Office of Management and Budget.

As a result, the President's budgets have requested a significant increase for SSA's administrative costs each year. This occurred at a time when the President's budgets contained little or no increases or even decreases in funding for most appropriated programs.

Unfortunately, through no lack of effort on Jo Anne's part, the amount of money ultimately appropriated for SSA's administrative costs has been substantially below the amount requested by the President each year. This is a problem that needs to be rectified in the future.

One of Jo Anne's finest moments came after the terrible hurricanes,